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Chairman: Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued) (A/51/59, A/51/73, A/51/87, A/51/120, A/51/127, A/51/138, A/51/208-S/1996/543, A/51/210, A/51/295, A/51/314, A/51/357, A/51/462-S/1996/831, A/51/375, A/51/529)

(d) POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/51/90, A/51/154, A/51/350)

1. Mr. AHMED (India) said that India's population had nearly tripled between 1951 and 1994, rising from 361 million to 900 million. By the year 2001, it was expected to exceed 1 billion. The birth rate had fallen from nearly 50 per thousand at the beginning of the century to 28.6 per thousand in 1994. During the same period, the mortality rate had fallen dramatically from more than 40 per thousand to 9.2 per thousand.

2. The Indian Government had taken a number of initiatives to implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The family welfare programme, which in its early stages had provided only contraceptive services, had matured into an integrated programme of maternal and child health and family planning (MCH/FP). The Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), begun in 1985, had led to a drop in the infant mortality rate from 97 per thousand live births in 1985 to 74 per thousand in 1994. During the period 1992-1993, UIP had been expanded and strengthened into the Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme (CSSM), which provided prenatal care, ensured that deliveries were performed by trained personnel and encouraged the spacing of births. It also included care for the newborn, provided for the immunization of children against six diseases and the treatment of diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections (ARI), and distributed vitamin A supplements.

3. India's current approach envisaged the continuation of the existing Programme and the introduction of others in the field of family planning, with emphasis on the quality of care, client satisfaction, community involvement and the creation of greater awareness of health, population and development issues. Programmes would also focus on the selective expansion of outreach and the strengthening of infrastructure.

4. The country had modified its programme management methods and had either reviewed or shifted the focus of its contraceptive targets towards the quality of the care provided (and no longer the number of sterilizations performed), the servicing of client needs and client satisfaction, and on increased cooperation with the personnel of other programmes, such as the agricultural extension programme.

5. Emphasis had been placed on community involvement in health, as had been shown by the social mobilization achieved for the launching of the polio immunization programme. A major vaccination campaign would be conducted each year aimed at eradicating polio by the year 2000. To that end, cooperation with non-governmental organizations would be strengthened.

6. The family welfare programme was currently being recast to ensure wider dissemination of information on safe motherhood and child survival and to promote the voluntary adoption of the small family norm and gender equality. It was important for the programme, to which India attached special importance, to provide credible coverage in terms of geographic area, section of the population served and quality of services rendered. Additional inflows of resources were required for that purpose and India called upon the international community to help it achieve its goals.

7. Mr. ACHA (Peru) said that the objectives of Peru's family planning policies were to improve the health of women and to combat poverty. In order to achieve those objectives, it was necessary to democratize access to family planning methods and promote the use of contraceptives. Like others, the poorest families should also have the right to decide, with full knowledge of the facts, the number and spacing of their children.

8. Population issues were directly linked to the status of women. That was why, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Peru had insisted on the right of each woman to freely decide on the number of children which she wished to have. The implementation of that right was dependent on improving the status of women.

9. The World Summit for Children, the International Conference on Population and Development, the Social Summit, and the Fourth World Conference on Women had underscored the need to promote economic and social development and gender equality and to elaborate programmes in the field of women's health, reproductive health, including family planning, safe motherhood and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS. To that end, Peru would shortly launch two important programmes: the national plan to reduce maternal mortality and the national reproductive health and family planning programme.

10. Poverty, high fertility rates and illiteracy had a direct impact on infant and maternal mortality, school enrolment rates, underemployment and unemployment, the proportion of women in the labour force, the number of school age children who were in employment and the financial difficulties of families. Moreover, a high fertility rate helped to perpetuate poverty from one generation to the next.

11. The national reproductive health and family planning programme was aimed at improving reproductive health and family planning services, developing information and education activities, expanding access to reproductive health and family planning services and developing local mechanisms for the promotion of reproductive health and family planning. Peru had set itself a number of objectives for the year 2000: lower the maternal mortality rate to under 200 per hundred thousand live births, achieve a fertility rate of 2.5 children per woman and reduce by 50 per cent the prenatal mortality rate in relation to 1995. It would be grateful if bilateral organizations and multilateral funds and programmes, such as UNFPA, which were active in the field of maternal and child health and reproductive health, could provide the technical and financial assistance that were needed for the fulfilment of those objectives.

12. Peru believed that the mechanisms for the follow-up to the Cairo Conference should be centralized and strengthened. The goal should be to achieve concrete results and to select indicators for the objective measurement of the progress made.

13. Mr. KWAK (Republic of Korea) said that population issues were an integral component of development strategies. The world population had more than doubled between 1945 and 1995 and was expected to continue increasing by 85 to 95 million people per year. The International Conference on Population and Development had highlighted the linkage between demographic trends and development strategies. Its Programme of Action, which established new objectives and a new approach to population issues, marked a shift from traditional planning to a people-centred development strategy.

14. The Republic of Korea attached great importance to population and development issues. Thus, it had greatly increased its contribution to UNFPA and would continue to strengthen its participation in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. It welcomed the fact that UNFPA had stressed the system-wide coordination of activities; in view of the difficulty of coordinating follow-up to the major global conferences, the role of ACC task forces should be strengthened in order to achieve better integration of population issues in sustainable development strategies. It also welcomed the reactivation of the activities of the Commission on Population and Development of the Economic and Social Council since the increase in its membership from 27 to 47 in 1995.

15. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/350), the Republic of Korea noted, first of all, that the development of an indicator to monitor progress in the field of population should not be an end in itself. Indicators should be simple, easy to understand and based on available economic and social data. It welcomed the fact that 96 per cent of population programme resources had been distributed to core activities rather than support activities. The delivery of basic services to people should remain the chief priority. Second, his delegation strongly supported the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, which should result in the further mobilization of additional resources. His delegation welcomed the initiative of Norway and the Netherlands in co-sponsoring an international meeting earlier in the year to study the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, and stressed that international coordination for its implementation should be strengthened. Third, South-South cooperation should be further strengthened. In that connection, the Republic of Korea commended the efforts of the Partners in Population and Development and the centres of excellence for South-South cooperation.

16. The Republic of Korea believed that, for purposes of comparing the different strategies adopted, UNFPA should submit a report, at the special session of the General Assembly in 1997, on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, focusing on the linkages between population, environment and development issues. It called on the international community to continue supporting population and development activities.

17. Mr. CHAMIE (Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis) said that the usefulness of population indicators was now recognized but that development indicators, on the other hand, were more difficult to define. The Statistical Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis was elaborating a set of indicators which would be strikingly similar to the indicators defined by the ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. He stressed that indicators could be no better than the data on which they were based. And yet, data collection in certain countries, particularly on mortality, was inadequate. The Department was therefore working, together with national agencies and offices, to improve data collection.

18. Ms. PIERCE (United Nations Population Fund) stressed that indicators must be perceived as practical tools enabling countries to gauge the progress achieved in the attainment of the goals they had set. She confirmed that UNFPA was preparing a report on the linkages between population and environmental issues, which would be submitted at the special session of the General Assembly. As UNFPA was the lead agency for chapter 5 of Agenda 21, the report would deal more specifically with the correlation between population, environment and poverty, and would focus special attention on the role of women.

19. Mr. RI (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the issues of population and development determined the quality of life and the well-being of individuals. If the proper solution to population problems was not found, the equality and sustainability of development could not be guaranteed. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea believed that, with a view to the thorough implementation of the Programme of Action on population and development, attention should be focused on the following issues. First, the role of the United Nations system, in particular, the Commission on Population and Development, in implementing the Programme of Action should be enhanced. The Executive Board of the United Nations Population Fund should also play a more important role. Second, the lack of resources, which impeded the implementation of the Programme of Action in developing countries, should be addressed as rapidly as possible. In that spirit, the international community should be encouraged to provide assistance. In that connection, the proposal formulated in 1995 to authorize the Secretary-General to submit information on contributions to the General Assembly on an annual basis was worthy of consideration. Lastly, the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development should be closely coordinated with the programmes of action adopted by the other development-related conferences.

20. Mr. SAAD (Tunisia) expressed satisfaction that the coordinated action of the United Nations organizations in implementing the Programme of Action of the Cairo Conference stressed people-centred development and the elimination of poverty. That strategy, which was designed to respond to the needs of peoples by stressing, in particular, basic social service for all, was the centrepiece of the Programme of Action of the Conference.

21. Concerning the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national level, resolution 50/124 stressed that Governments must take an integrated approach to the questions of population and development. Tunisia had launched a

national plan geared essentially to women, particularly in the rural area, and children, whose ultimate objective was the elimination of poverty. Convinced that children were the best investment for the country's progress and stability, Tunisia had elaborated programmes on the protection and development of the child which laid emphasis on basic education, primary health care and nutrition. Nonetheless, activities relating to children could only be successful if measures for women were taken. Accordingly, Tunisia had taken steps to ensure that women became more prominent on the national scene and asserted themselves as productive agents, as decision-makers and, therefore, as agents of development. The integration of women in the management of national affairs was part of an economic and social strategy designed to guarantee integrated and sustainable national development. The Tunisian President had established a National Solidarity Fund in order to maintain a balance among the different parts of the country and distribute the country's wealth more equitably among all its inhabitants. Buoyed by the success of the Fund, Tunisia had decided to launch an even more ambitious programme during the 1995-1999 period.

22. His country was willing to share its experience with any interested countries. In that regard, South-South cooperation should be developed in the area of population and development, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and General Assembly resolution 50/124. His delegation wished to pay tribute to UNFPA for contributing to the promotion of South-South cooperation through its support for Partners in Population and Development and the establishment of centres of excellence for South-South cooperation.

23. The international community should endeavour not only to attain the agreed target of allocating 0.7 per cent of GNP to official development assistance but also to allocate more resources to population and development programmes.

AGENDA ITEM 95: SECTORAL POLICY QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued) (A/C.2/51/L.12)

24. Mrs. DENGO (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Colombia, on behalf of the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/51/L.12 entitled "Industrial development cooperation" and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus. The draft resolution stressed the fact that today, in view of the globalization of the world economy, industrialization was more important than ever before and that industrial development, particularly in developing countries, should be promoted through various means.

AGENDA ITEM 96: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP TO MAJOR CONSENSUS AGREEMENTS ON DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/51/L.13)

25. Mrs. DENGO (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/51/L.13 entitled "Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International

Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and Implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade" and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus. The draft resolution emphasized the need to implement the Declaration and the Strategy in the remaining years of the 1990s and the need for the Secretary-General to submit a progress report emphasizing the relationship between the Declaration and the Strategy and stressing experiences in the area of development strategies.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (A/51/3 (part I), (part II), (part III), A/51/135-E/1996/51, A/51/379 and A/C.2/51/L.2)

26. Mr. STOBY (Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), referring to the question of improving the functioning of the Economic and Social Council pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/227, said that the Council's report before the Committee now included information on all the activities it had carried out during 1996. While essentially procedural issues had been removed, resolutions and decisions had been included. For the first time, next year, the outcome of the high-level segment would emerge in the form of agreed conclusions. The theme selected for the high-level segment - "fostering an enabling environment for development" - was important enough to justify strenuous efforts towards securing a worthwhile outcome.

27. The discussions of the operational activities segment should ensure the oversight of activities of the United Nations funds and programmes, providing them with policy guidance and identifying areas susceptible to joint action. The reports that would be submitted the following year on the overall financial situation and funding arrangements for the funds and programmes should contribute to achieving those goals. It was important, however, for the Council to have the reports it needed. Better use should be made of the annual report synthesizing the material in the reports submitted by the separate bodies, which was a valuable tool.

28. The Council should also make better use of the general segment and rationalize its work during that segment. It had already been proposed by the Secretariat that the agendas and multi-year programmes of work of the functional commissions should be harmonized and coordinated. The practice of having reports submitted to the General Assembly through the Council should cease, except for a limited number of exceptions; a compendium report could be prepared covering all the reports of the Council's subsidiary bodies, which would save delegations time; and one or two priority topics might be selected annually. It would also be desirable to further rationalize the Council's agenda and to reduce the demand for documentation. While total Secretariat staff had been reduced by 25 per cent, the number of bodies, meetings and, consequently, the volume of documentation had increased by 30 per cent. That was an issue which would have to be resolved.

29. Finally, he pointed out that the Council was not devoting adequate attention to its relationship with civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations. It should also pay more attention to globalization and its economic, financial and cultural implications. Similarly, the Council should

consider the information technology revolution and its implications for developing countries. The Council should provide support to the Security Council in relation to political-cum-humanitarian crises. In that connection, the establishment of a continuing mechanism could prove very useful.

30. Mr. BEHBEHANI (Director, Division of Control of Tropical Diseases, World Health Organization), introducing the report on preventive action and intensification of the struggle against malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa (A/51/379), said that the World Health Organization (WHO) was vigorously pursuing the implementation of the Global Malaria Control Strategy, which had been endorsed in 1992 by many health institutions, and by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994. In 1995, the Economic and Social Council had also endorsed the Action Plan for Malaria Control and the General Assembly had again expressed concern over the effects of that disease and had called on the international community to provide adequate technical, financial and medical assistance to the affected developing countries and to reinforce the mandate of WHO.

31. Malaria was the most serious tropical disease in the world today. It affected businessmen and tourists alike but, most of all, it was a veritable scourge for those populations living in endemic areas, in particular the poorest population groups. It was responsible for 2.7 million deaths and 500 clinical episodes each year and put 2 billion people at risk. Ninety per cent of malaria epidemics occurred in sub-Saharan Africa and the increase in the number of such epidemics was caused by a variety of health, economic, political and financial factors. Land degradation and deforestation increased the spread of malaria and had serious social and economic consequences. Therefore, investments in the development of new drugs and effective and affordable vaccines must be increased.

32. Based on national plans of action, WHO had helped to prepare project proposals for 14 African countries for submission to different donors and had participated in malaria control activities in 16 other African countries. A Task Force had been established in 1995 to help African countries to improve their efforts in the area of malaria control and a meeting organized by WHO and the World Bank had developed guidelines to enable control programmes to move forward. WHO continued, in close cooperation with international, bilateral and non-governmental organizations, to provide technical and emergency assistance to countries and population groups which needed it, especially refugees and displaced persons.

33. The incorporation of malaria control into the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, which had been launched in January 1996, was of special significance. There was a political commitment to malaria control and malaria control capacities had been established. What was now needed was the implementation and continuous evaluation of national plans of action. Coordination within the United Nations system was taking place and the General Assembly could play an important role in strengthening such cooperation and in ensuring the success of initiatives to control malaria. Malaria could be controlled and those who had the means to do so should take immediate action.

34. Ms. AL-BASSAM (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office), introducing the report on permanent sovereignty over national resources in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (A/51/135-E/1996/51), said that the General Assembly, in resolution 50/129, had underscored the negative economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian people and territory. The report, submitted pursuant to that resolution, showed that the illegal occupation, which violated the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, took various forms: expropriations and confiscation and take-over of Palestinian lands. Under the pretext of ensuring their security or creating nature preserves, the Israeli settlements were becoming further entrenched, in particular by the appropriation of water resources and the building of roads. That new attitude must be judged in the light of the peace accords. The Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1996/40, had taken note of the report and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session a report on the progress made.

35. Mr. GRANT (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, observed that even though there had been a certain welcome improvement in the performance of the Economic and Social Council, the organization of the Council's substantive session had been disappointing in a number of respects. A higher degree of preparation by the Bureau, aided by the secretariat, was absolutely essential. The European Union was, however, pleased to note that some of the points of concern to it had been duly taken into account by the President of the Council, and that he had suggested that the members of the Bureau should safeguard and pass on to the next session of the Council the overall experience they had acquired. The implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 remained one of the European Union's priorities, because it believed that it would enable the Council to coordinate better the activities of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields.

36. Ms. LEBL (United States of America) said that her delegation welcomed the progress made at the latest substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. Council resolution 1996/41, adopted in July, set out specific measures for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. In fall 1997, the Council was to consider how it would be possible to shorten its summer session. In February 1997, the Secretary-General would submit a report enabling Member States to review the mandates, functions, methods of work and membership of the many Council bodies. In the course of summer 1997, the Council would as a priority examine four subsidiary bodies - the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Committee on Development Planning, the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, and the Committee on Natural Resources - and would have before it reports from some of the regional commissions regarding the establishment of priorities. In fall 1997, the Council would take decisions on the functional commissions and expert groups.

37. The United States believed that the Commission on Sustainable Development could assume a useful role within the Council by overseeing the integrated implementation of the major conferences on sustainable development, thus yielding improvements in the way the United Nations worked. Member States had been less successful in improving the work methods of the Council itself, yet

that was essential if initiatives to strengthen collaboration between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions were to bear fruit.

38. The Council should be guided by the reforms introduced by the Second and Third Committees in their work methods. The Council's Bureau and its role in making policy for the operational development programmes should be strengthened; and the Council's subsidiary bodies with overlapping mandates should be consolidated. The United States believed that three development-related secretariat departments should be merged under the authority of a single Under-Secretary-General who would serve also as the Council's Executive Secretary.

39. If the United Nations were revitalized, it would be enabled to better fulfil its mandates in peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and sustainable development. Any resulting savings could be reprogrammed into areas that supported United Nations development assistance.

40. It should be recalled, moreover, that any extension of the fourth session of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests was to be funded from existing resources.

41. Mr. YU Qingtai (China) said that General Assembly resolution 50/227 set out comprehensive, systematic measures aimed at improving the efficiency of the Economic and Social Council. The 1997 substantive session would provide an opportunity to consider whether such measures were feasible and effective, and whether they were conducive to the Council's revitalization.

42. The high-level segment, where discussions were conducted on major economic and social issues, should explore a theme reflecting issues of concern to the international community, and in particular to the developing countries, and should produce recommendations for the enhancement of global macroeconomic policy coordination. The dialogue should become more focused and, to enhance its effectiveness, should involve as high-level a participation as possible.

43. The general segment, which was the main forum for reviewing the reports and recommendations of the various subsidiary bodies, had a direct bearing on the efficiency and performance of the Council. Resolution 50/227 invited the Council to review the agenda of its general segment regularly, and China believed that should be done in such a way as to reflect the ultimate objective of promoting development through international cooperation.

44. Improving the efficiency of the Council as a whole also depended on improving the work of the Bureau and the secretariat. Resolution 50/227 set out new tasks and responsibilities for the Bureau; it was now to work on organizational arrangements and to improve the transparency of its activities.

45. His delegation hoped that the 1997 substantive session would help improve the efficiency of the Council and give impetus to international cooperation for development.

46. Mr. NEBENZYA (Russian Federation) said that his delegation regretted the lack of progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution

50/227 and called upon the Committee to, as it were, revitalize the revitalization process, not merely for the sake of savings but for the sake of improving the effectiveness of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields.

47. In particular, the shortening of the substantive session to four weeks had to be reconciled with the growing list of tasks assigned to the Council. The Bureau had a special responsibility in that regard. The success of the whole effort depended upon its competence, energy and dedication. Preparations for the substantive session demanded a greater effort from Member States in terms of informal consultations, and they should be undertaken with more enthusiasm.

48. The role of the Economic and Social Council should be clearly defined. His delegation considered it to be the main coordinating body of the United Nations in the economic and social fields; it served as a link between subsidiary bodies and between the specialized agencies and the General Assembly. To some extent, the Council's task was to provide practical guidance to its subsidiary bodies and to ensure coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

49. The most recent substantive session of the Council had begun on a positive note, including the adoption of decisions to implement General Assembly resolution 50/227, the constructive review of the question of international cooperation to combat drugs, and the consensus reached on the importance of strengthening collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. The debate on operational activities for development also had been very constructive. However, the Russian delegation regretted that representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization had not been present during the high-level segment and that crucial issues, including the reports of the coordinating bodies - the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Committee for Programme and Coordination - had been deferred until the resumed session.

50. His delegation hoped that the organization of work would be substantially improved. First, it was necessary to agree on the mechanisms for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227. It also was necessary to agree on the agenda for the next substantive session, review the agenda in order to eliminate items which did not relate to the work of subsidiary bodies, distinguish between the points requiring decisions and those discussed solely for information, and discontinue the adoption of politically motivated resolutions which added no value to the practical functioning of the Council or of the economic and social sector in general.

51. Duplication in the agenda items of the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee was inevitable since the two bodies covered the same issues. However, steps should be taken to ensure that the Council focused in its general segment on the decisions of its subsidiary bodies and on coordination and that the General Assembly engaged in substantive discussions.

52. In order to improve efficiency, it also would be useful to consider inter-agency mechanisms of coordination within ACC, as well as the programme

planning process. He hoped that those proposals would be considered at the resumed session in November.

53. Mr. JILANI (Observer for Palestine) said that the violation by Israel of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their sovereignty over their natural resources, had been a cause of grave economic and social injustice in the occupied territories since 1967. In violation of Palestinian development efforts and of the peace process in general, Israel prevented the Palestinian people from exploiting their own land and water resources and continued to expropriate land, expand colonial settlements and divert water for its own use, at the expense of the Palestinian people, who were experiencing a serious water shortage. Moreover, Israel imposed unjustified restrictions and controls on Palestinian exports.

54. Such policies and measures had grave economic and social consequences for the Palestinian people and also illustrated the extent of Israeli violations of international law and humanitarian law, against the will of the international community.

55. The agreements signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization had not produced the expected benefits. The Palestinian side, which remained committed to the peace process, believed that the agreements must be implemented in good faith and on time. The Palestinian people had the right to sovereignty over their natural resources (land, water and geological resources). They had the right to restitution and full compensation for damages.

56. The General Assembly must monitor Israeli policy in that regard and bring it in line with international law by protecting the Palestinian economy from the negative effects of arbitrary and unlawful practices. The resolution to be submitted to the Second Committee on sovereignty over natural resources would include a provision requesting the Secretary-General to submit a report on the matter, which, he hoped, would lead to more in-depth deliberations at the next session.

57. Mr. MANOR (Israel) said that his country had a strong commitment to the peace process and hoped to receive the support of the international community. Such support included advocacy of the principle of direct negotiations, which formed the basis of the peace process which had begun in Madrid, the creation of an atmosphere conducive to negotiations and the adoption of resolutions reflecting the progress achieved. Considerable progress had been made: the agreements signed had created a new reality in the region, in which the majority of Palestinians henceforth lived under the administration of the Palestinian Authority and no longer of Israel.

58. The issue before the Committee, namely, Israeli settlements, was dealt with in the agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and should be resolved in direct negotiations along with the question of permanent status; therefore, it would be premature and contrary to the spirit and letter of the agreements to bring the issue up elsewhere.

59. The Israeli authorities had some grievances against the Palestinian side but had chosen to air them in the various bodies established by the agreements between Israel and the PLO. The current Israeli Government was committed to advancing the peace process and hoped that the permanent status negotiations would make it possible to resolve the settlements issue.

60. Mr. ABDELLATIF (Egypt), referring to the report annexed to the note by the Secretary-General (A/51/135-E/1996/51), said that the situation in the Syrian Golan was not discussed in detail until paragraph 49 and that the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli settlements were not clearly explained.

61. In many resolutions, the United Nations had condemned the establishment of Israeli settlements and had reaffirmed that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War was applicable to occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. In its resolution 446 (1979), for example, the Security Council stated that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in those territories had no legal validity and constituted a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Egyptian delegation also wished to recall the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993, which prohibited Israel from taking any action to influence the outcome of the negotiations dealing, inter alia, with settlements.

62. Israel clearly was deliberately ignoring those resolutions, as well as the right of the Syrian and Palestinian people to control their own resources, as demonstrated by the financial and tax incentives offered by the Israeli authorities to encourage the settlement of the occupied Arab territories. Moreover, after the signing of the agreements on interim self-government arrangements, the Israeli Government had confiscated additional Arab lands in order to build roads and security blockades, on the pretext of enhancing the security of the settlers.

63. The international community had welcomed the agreements concluded between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization; it saw their signing as an important step towards the establishment of peace in the Middle East. The implementation of the Agreements, however, had been hampered by the establishment of settlements. The Agreement signed in September 1995 provided for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Hebron at the end of August 1996. Israel still had not executed that withdrawal - the excuse being the presence of 400 settlers in Hebron - thus preventing the 120,000 Palestinians living there and in the surrounding area from regaining their freedom. Moreover, Israel was attempting to modify the agreement, which would establish a precedent and could influence the implementation of other agreements.

64. It was clear that Israel intended to pursue its settlement policy, even though the parties had decided five years earlier in Madrid to establish a peace founded on the principle of land for peace. Nonetheless, the Israeli Government was currently refusing to implement the agreements concluded with the Palestinians. Israel must respect those agreements for that was the only way to preserve the economic and political stability of the region.

65. Mr. RAMOUL (Algeria) said that he wished to reiterate the statement made by his delegation in its capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

66. The international community had witnessed the bloody events which had occurred in the occupied Palestinian territory when Israel opened a tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque in violation of the sacredness of the site, of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and of the agreements reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

67. The Israeli practice of establishing settlements and modifying the architectural parameters of Al-Quds were clearly in violation of international law and had been condemned on several occasions by the Security Council, in its resolutions 446 (1979) and 465 (1980) in particular.

68. The events of September attested to the seriousness of the situation in the occupied Arab territories. Immediate action was needed in order to end the suffering of the Palestinian population who were being subjected, by the Israeli authorities, to collective punishment, confiscation of land and expansion of settlements.

69. Mr. AZAIEZ (Tunisia) said that the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/135-E/1996/51) proved that Israel was pursuing its expansionist policy without any regard for the various agreements concluded or for international public opinion. The number of settlements was increasing steadily; the Israeli authorities had even sought to surround Jerusalem so as to safeguard its Jewish character. Thus, the current negotiations seemed to be pointless. Israeli settlements had been the subject of many reports and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In its resolution 446 of 22 March 1979, the Security Council had determined that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 had no legal validity and constituted a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and had reaffirmed that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 applied to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. In its resolution 50/129, the General Assembly had reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan to their natural and all other economic resources and had regarded any infringement thereupon as illegal.

70. Israel had nevertheless continued to confiscate hundreds of hectares of Arab land in the West Bank, which was the sole resource of thousands of Palestinian families to expand the number of settlements and to divert water resources, all of which had negative effects on the economic and social situation of the Palestinians.

71. The events described in the report of the Secretary-General were very serious; they proved how intransigent the Israeli authorities were being; the latter were paying no attention to United Nations resolutions, had gone back on the very foundation of the negotiations and were refusing to implement the Oslo and Madrid Agreements. At the Cairo Summit in June 1996, the Arab countries had reaffirmed their attachment to the principle of a definitive solution to the

problem. Peace could not be established without respect for international legitimacy, the return of land to its rightful owners and peaceful coexistence among the various parties, which would be beneficial to the entire region and the international community.

72. Tunisia had wagered on peace and had participated in the various multilateral negotiations. It reaffirmed that the United Nations must push the Israeli authorities to put an end to settlements so that the peoples of the Middle East could be safe from war and could enjoy peace and security everywhere.

73. Mr. ELTINAY (Sudan) said that, at the 1996 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, the high-level segment had addressed an important topic, drug control. The Sudan was looking forward to the Special Session of the General Assembly, planned for 1998, which would provide a framework for the elaboration of international strategies to combat drugs, a scourge which threatened the future of humanity.

74. His delegation welcomed Economic and Social Council decision 1996/292 concerning the establishment of settlements and stressed that the obstinacy of the Israeli occupying forces in building settlements in the occupied Arab territories constituted a clear violation of the basic instruments of international law and ran counter to the efforts being made to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. In that connection, he recalled that, according to the statement made by the Israeli Minister of Housing, the Israeli Government was planning to put over 100,000 settlers in the Palestinian territories; the international community had not raised any objection.

75. The partiality evident in the field of human rights - reflected in the fact that some countries, including his own, were accused of not respecting human rights, whereas the practices of the Israeli occupying forces were seen as justified - damaged the cause of human rights.

76. Turning to development activities, he said that his delegation deplored the fact that the Secretary-General, in his note to the Council, had once again presented the humanitarian assistance provided to the Sudan as development assistance, and it once again requested that a distinction be made between the two forms of assistance in future reports on operational activities.

77. In his report on preventive action and intensification of the struggle against malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa, the Director-General of WHO had mentioned only the assistance required by refugee groups within Sudan without mentioning the needs of the Sudanese people. The Sudan was among the least developed of the African countries affected by that disease, and it had been one of the first countries to establish a national programme to combat malaria, at a cost of $106 million.

78. Although 500 million people were infected with malaria each year and 3 million died from the disease it must be acknowledged that the resources

allocated to combating that disease were far from sufficient. Thus, a global strategy to combat malaria must be established and the resources needed for its implementation must be found

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.